



4 Steps to Guided Relaxation

Step 1 Conscious Abdominal Breathing- Sit in a comfortable position with your feet flat on the floor and your arms at your sides. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Think about nothing but your breathing as you count each inhalation and exhalation. Focus on breathing so that your abdomen goes up and down (abdominal breathing). Put a book on it and notice it rise and fall. Notice your breathing as the air flows in and out of your body. Begin to count as you inhale and count as you exhale, going at your own pace or rate of breathing. Continue to focus on breathing in and breathing out, thinking about nothing but the smooth rhythmical flow of your own breathing. Practice 10 minutes a day for two weeks. Additionally, you can count backwards from each breath from 40.

Step 2 Affirming Self-talk- Get in a comfortable position and breathe slowly. Scan your body for tension and when you notice it, relax that area of your body. As you relax, repeat to yourself, “I am calm and in control. I am calm and in control.” “As long as I keep cool, I am in control.” If your mind wanders or you get distracted, it is ok. Bring your thoughts back to your statement, “I am calm and in control.” Words are powerful and as you focus on certain words or phrases, you can continue to feel in a state of calm and relaxation.

Step 3 Progressive Muscle Relaxation-Sit comfortably and breathe as above. Begin first by squeezing your eyes tight and wrinkling your forehead. Notice the tension and continue to hold as long as you can. Then relax and notice the warm sensation of relaxation around your eyes and forehead. Next, make a grimace with your face so that you feel the tension in the muscles of your face, neck and jaw. Notice the tension and then relax, feeling the warm sensation. Push your shoulders up to your ears while at the same time pushing your head to the back of your neck and hold. Hold the tension, study the tension, and then relax. Now place one hand over the other and place them over your abdomen, pushing your abdomen out as you push your hands in against it. Feel the tension in your abdomen and as it spreads to your arms, shoulders, and back. Then relax. Next raise your feet off the floor and point your feet toward your knees as you tense and extend your legs and flex your ankles. Hold this position as you feel the tension through out your lower body, study the tension, and then relax. Now tense every muscle in your body. Hold it, study it, and relax. Continue sitting in your original position and notice the difference between the tension and the relaxation. Know the difference between the two. Now open your eyes and stretch, feeling refreshed and alert, continue on with your day.

Step 4 Mental Imagery- Again sit comfortable and breath slowly and rhythmically until you feel relaxed. Shift your thoughts from the breathing to a place you have been before that you find to be a perfect place for rest and relaxation. It should be a calm and peaceful place that you can enjoy visiting in your mind from time to time. Now visualize that place as you think about what

you would see in detail if you were actually there. What sights, colors, and views would you see? What sounds would you hear? What might you smell, taste or touch with your senses. Continue to imagine this place of peace and enjoy it with all of your senses as you continue to relax and breathe slowly. Feel the peace, calm and relaxation. Now open our eyes slowly and stretch. Enjoy the feeling of refreshment.

Submitted by Tracey Crawley, LMFT

7 Holistic Steps for Self-Care

From Kay Arthur, When the Hurt Runs Deep

1. Make sure you consciously inject, include, acknowledge God in every situation. Philippians 4:13 “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” Ephesians 3:20 “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,” Practice the triad of
 - a. Rejoicing always
 - b. Praying without ceasing
 - c. Giving thanks always for all things
2. Find what lifts your spirit-reading, journaling, writing poems, singing, reading Psalms, reading biographies that inspire.
3. Make sure you give your body what it needs (classic self care)
 - d. Rest-adequate and fulfilling sleep
 - e. Food-sufficient calories and nutrients
 - f. Exercise-increases oxygen flow, generates endorphins to elevate mood and sense of well-being
 - g. Light- 20 minutes of sunshine. Get out of the house.
4. Resist isolation. Get the right people to come alongside you. Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12 and Proverbs 17:17 “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.”
5. Master your thoughts. You have the mind of Christ, refuse Satan. Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” II Corinthians 10:5 “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”
6. Read the Psalms and speak God’s word back to Him. He understands all your dark emotions and speaks to the soul in Psalms. Speak them out loud and write what you hear.
7. Play music, sing, and laugh. Proverbs 17:22 “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” More happy endorphins from music, not to mention the message if you choose well.

3 Life Preserving Words

Persevere “to persist in anything under taken...to maintain a purpose in spite of difficulty, obstacles, or discouragement...to continue steadfastly.” James 1:12

Endure “to hold out against...to sustain without yielding...to bear with patience.” Hebrews 10:35-36 and 12:1.

Exult “to show or feel a lively or triumphant joy...to rejoice exceedingly...to be highly elated or jubilant...to leap upward, especially for joy.” Romans 5:1-5 James 1:2-4.

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